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1975/10/21

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Authority NWD 9/15/70
By JWF NARA Date 9/12/97

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

SECRET/SENSITIVE

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

- Chairman Mao Tse-tung
- Teng Hsiao-p'ing, Vice Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China
- Ch'iao Kuan-hua, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Amb. Huang Chen, Chief of PRC Liaison Office, Washington
- Wang Hai-jung, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs
- T'ang Wen-sheng, Deputy Director, Department of American and Oceanic Affairs and interpreter
- Chang Han-chih, Deputy Director, Department of American and Oceanic Affairs
- Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
- Ambassador George Bush, Chief of U.S. Liaison Office, Peking
- Winston Lord, Director, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, October 21, 1975
6:25 - 8:05 p.m.

PLACE: Chairman Mao's Residence, Peking

At 5:45 p.m. during a meeting with Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping, Secretary Kissinger was informed that Chairman Mao would like to see him at 6:30. He was asked to name those members of his party, including his wife, whom he would like to have greeted by the Chairman, as well as those two officials who would accompany him to the talks themselves. The meeting with Teng lasted another 15 minutes. Then Dr. Kissinger and his party rested until 6:15, when they went from the Great Hall of the People to the Chairman's residence.

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Each of the following were introduced to the Chairman in turn and exchanged brief greetings while photographs and movies were taken: Secretary Kissinger, Mrs. Kissinger, Amb. Bush, Counselor Sonnenfeldt, Assistant Secretary Habib, Director Winston Lord, Mr. William Gleysteen, Mr. Peter Rodman (NSC), and Ms. Anne Boddicker (NSC). The Chairman stood and talked with considerable difficulty. When he saw Mrs. Kissinger, he sat down and asked for a note pad and wrote out the comment that she towered over Secretary Kissinger. He then got up again and greeted the rest of the party. Then the guests were escorted out of the room except for Secretary Kissinger, Ambassador Bush and Mr. Lord.

The participants sat in arm chairs in a semi-circle. Throughout the conversation the Chairman would either speak with great difficulty, with Miss Tang and Miss Wang repeating what he said for confirmation and then translating, or he would write out his remarks on a note pad held by his nurse. Throughout the conversation the Chairman gestured vigorously with his hands and fingers in order to underline his point.

Chairman Mao: You know I have various ailments all over me. I am going to heaven soon.

Secretary Kissinger: Not soon.

Chairman Mao: Soon. I've already received an invitation from God.

Secretary Kissinger: I hope you won't accept it for a long while.

Chairman Mao: I accept the orders of the Doctor.

Secretary Kissinger: Thank you. The President is looking forward very much to a visit to China and the opportunity to meet the Chairman.

Chairman Mao: He will be very welcome.

Secretary Kissinger: We attach very great significance to our relationship with the People's Republic.

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Chairman Mao: There is some significance, not so very great. (Gesturing with his fingers) You are this (wide space between two fingers) and we are this (small space). Because you have the atom bombs, and we don't.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, but the Chairman has often said that military power is not the only decisive factor.

Chairman Mao: As Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping has said, millet plus rifles.

Secretary Kissinger: And we have some common opponents.

Chairman Mao: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger: You said that in English and wrote it. Can I have it?

Chairman Mao: Yes. (He hands over the note he had written out.)

Secretary Kissinger: I see the Chairman is progressing in learning English.

Chairman Mao: No (holding two fingers close together). So you have quarreled with him (pointing toward Vice Premier Teng).

Secretary Kissinger: Only about the means for a common objective.

Chairman Mao: Yesterday, during your quarrel with the Vice Premier, you said the US asked nothing of China and China asked nothing of the US. As I see it, this is partially right and partially wrong. The small issue is Taiwan, the big issue is the world. (He begins coughing and the nurse comes in to help him.) If neither side had anything to ask from the other, why would you be coming to Peking? If neither side had anything to ask, then why did you want to come to Peking, and why would we want to receive you and the President?

Secretary Kissinger: We come to Peking because we have a common opponent and because we think your perception of the world situation is the clearest of any country we deal with and with which we agree on some . . . many points.

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Chairman Mao: That's not reliable. Those words are not reliable. Those words are not reliable because according to your priorities the first is the Soviet Union, the second is Europe and the third is Japan.

Secretary Kissinger: That is not correct.

Chairman Mao: It is in my view. (Counting with his fingers.) America, the Soviet Union, Europe, Japan, China. You see, five (holding up his five fingers).

Secretary Kissinger: That's not correct.

Chairman Mao: So, then we quarrel.

Secretary Kissinger: We quarrel. The Soviet Union is a great danger for us, but not a high priority.

Chairman Mao: That's not correct. It is a superpower. There are only two superpowers in the world (counting on his fingers). We are backward (counting on his fingers). America, the Soviet Union, Europe, Japan, China. We come last. America, Soviet Union, Europe, Japan, China -- look.

Secretary Kissinger: I know I almost never disagree with the Chairman, but he is not correct on this point -- only because it is a matter of our priority.

Chairman Mao: (Tapping both his shoulders) We see that what you are doing is leaping to Moscow by way of our shoulders, and these shoulders are now useless. You see, we are the fifth. We are the small finger.

Secretary Kissinger: We have nothing to gain in Moscow.

Chairman Mao: But you can gain Taiwan in China.

Secretary Kissinger: We can gain Taiwan in China?

Chairman Mao: But you now have the Taiwan of China.

Secretary Kissinger: But we will settle that between us.

Chairman Mao: In a hundred years.

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Secretary Kissinger: That's what the Chairman said the last time I was here.

Chairman Mao: Exactly.

Secretary Kissinger: It won't take a hundred years.. Much less.

Chairman Mao: It's better for it to be in your hands. And if you were to send it back to me now, I would not want it, because it's not wantable. There are a huge bunch of counter-revolutionaries there. A hundred years hence we will want it (gesturing with his hand), and we are going to fight for it.

Secretary Kissinger: Not a hundred years.

Chairman Mao: (Gesturing with his hand, counting) It is hard to say. Five years, ten, twenty, a hundred years. It's hard to say. (Points toward the ceiling) And when I go to heaven to see God, I'll tell him it's better to have Taiwan under the care of the United States now.

Secretary Kissinger: He'll be very astonished to hear that from the Chairman.

Chairman Mao: No, because God blesses you, not us. God does not like us (waves his hands) because I am a militant warlord, also a communist. That's why he doesn't like me. (Pointing to the three Americans) He likes you and you and you.

Secretary Kissinger: I've never had the pleasure of meeting him, so I'm not sure.

Chairman Mao: I'm sure. I'm 82 years old now. (Points toward Secretary Kissinger) And how old are you? 50 maybe.

Secretary Kissinger: 51.

Chairman Mao: (Pointing toward Vice Premier Teng) He's 71. (Waving his hands) And after we're all dead, myself, him (Teng), Chou En-lai, and Yeh Chien-ying, you will still be alive. See? We old ones will not do. We are not going to make it out.

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Secretary Kissinger: If I may say one thing about what the Chairman said earlier about our relative priorities.

Chairman Mao: All right:

Secretary Kissinger: Because the Soviet Union is a superpower it is inevitable that it has much priority, and we have to deal with it very frequently. But in terms of strategy we are trying to contain Soviet expansionism, and this is why in strategy China has priority for us. But we don't want to use China to jump to Moscow because that would be suicidal.

Chairman Mao: You've already jumped there, but you no longer need our shoulders.

Secretary Kissinger: We haven't jumped there. It's a tactical phase which the President will also affirm to you.

Chairman Mao: And please convey my regards to your President.

Secretary Kissinger: I will do this.

Chairman Mao: We welcome his visit.

Do you have any way to assist me in curing my present inability to speak clearly?

Secretary Kissinger: You make yourself very well understood even so.

Chairman Mao: This part (pointing to his brain) is working well, and I can eat and sleep. (Patting his knees) These parts are not good. They do not ache, but they are not firm when I walk. I also have some trouble with my lungs. And in one word, I am not well, and majorally (sic) unwell.

Secretary Kissinger: It's always a great joy to see the Chairman.

Chairman Mao: You know I'm a showcase exhibit for visitors.

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Secretary Kissinger: I've read over our conversation two years ago, Mr. Chairman. I think it was one of the most profound expositions of international affairs, and we take it very seriously.

Chairman Mao: But there's still some things which we must wait to observe. Some of the assessments I made still have to be moved by the objective situation.

Secretary Kissinger: But I think the basic assessment the Chairman made at that time insofar as the situation has developed has proven correct, and we basically agree with it. We've had a difficult period because of the resignation of President Nixon, and we've had to do more maneuvering than we would have liked.

Chairman Mao: I think that can be done. Maneuvering is allowable.

Secretary Kissinger: It was essential, but we are putting that situation behind us.

Chairman Mao: Europe is too soft now.

Secretary Kissinger: We agree with the Chairman -- Europe is too soft.

Chairman Mao: They are afraid of the Soviet Union.

Secretary Kissinger: They are afraid of the Soviet Union and their domestic situation.

Chairman Mao: Japan is seeking hegemony.

Secretary Kissinger: Japan is not yet ready to seek hegemony. That will require one more change in leadership. But potentially Japan has the potential for seeking hegemony.

Chairman Mao: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger: I think the next generation of leaders, my student Nakasone, he was a student of mine when I was a professor.... That generation will be more ready to use the power of Japan.

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Chairman Mao: Europe is too scattered, too loose.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. We prefer Europe to be unified and stronger.

Chairman Mao: That is also our preference. But it is too loose and spread out, and it is difficult for it to achieve unity.

Secretary Kissinger: Also it does not have too many strong leaders.

Chairman Mao: Oh, yes.

Secretary Kissinger: But Schmidt, who comes here next week, is the strongest of the leaders in Europe today.

Chairman Mao: France is afraid of Germany (counting on his fingers). They are afraid of the reunification of West Germany and East Germany, which would result in a fist.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, France prefers to keep Germany divided.

Chairman Mao: (Nodding yes) That's not good.

Secretary Kissinger: But they may unite on a nationalistic basis, East and West Germany.

Chairman Mao: Yes, we are in favor of reunification.

Secretary Kissinger: It depends under whom.

Chairman Mao: West Germany has a population of 50 million while East Germany has a population of 18 million.

Secretary Kissinger: West Germany is the strongest side materially.

Chairman Mao: But the reunification of Germany now would not be dangerous.

Secretary Kissinger: We favor the reunification of Germany, but right now it would be prevented militarily by the Soviet Union. But the US supports the reunification of Germany.

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Chairman Mao: We agree on that, you and we.

Secretary Kissinger: And we are not afraid of a unified Germany, but Soviet power in Europe must be weakened before it can happen.

Chairman Mao: Without a fight the Soviet Union cannot be weakened.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, but it is important for us to pick the right moment for this, and during the period of Watergate we were in no position to do it. And that is why we had to maneuver.

Chairman Mao: And it seems it was not necessary to conduct the Watergate affair in that manner.

Secretary Kissinger: It was inexcusable. Inexcusable. (Miss Tang indicates puzzlement.) It was inexcusable to conduct it in that manner. It was a minor event that was played into a national and international tragedy by a group of very shortsighted people. President Nixon was a good President (Chairman Mao nods affirmatively) and I'm still in very frequent contact with him.

Chairman Mao: Please convey my regards to Mr. Nixon.

Secretary Kissinger: I'll call him when I return.

Chairman Mao: So please first of all send my regards to President Ford and secondly my regards to Mr. Nixon.

Secretary Kissinger: I'll do both of these with great pleasure.

Chairman Mao: You're too busy.

Secretary Kissinger: You think I travel too much?

Chairman Mao: I was saying that you are too busy, and it seems that it won't do if you're not so busy. You cannot keep from being so busy. When the wind and rain are coming, the swallows are busy.

Secretary Kissinger: That will take me several days to understand the full significance of that.

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Chairman Mao: This world is not tranquil, and a storm -- the wind and rain -- are coming. And at the approach of the rain and wind the swallows are busy.

Miss Tang: He (the Chairman) asks me how one says "swallow" in English and what is "sparrow". Then I said it is a different kind of bird.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, but I hope we have a little more effect on the storm than the swallows do on the wind and rain.

Chairman Mao: It is possible to postpone the arrival of the wind and rain, but it's difficult to obstruct the coming.

Secretary Kissinger: But it's important to be in the best position to deal with it when it does come, and that is not a trivial matter. We agree with you that the wind and rain are coming or may come, and we try to put ourselves in the best possible position, not to avoid it but to overcome it.

Chairman Mao: Dunkirk.

Secretary Kissinger: Not for us.

Chairman Mao: That is not reliable. You can see that that is not the case for you now.

Secretary Kissinger: That will not be the case for us in the future.

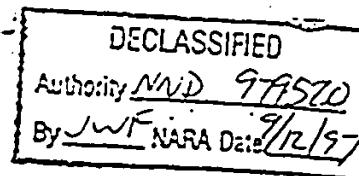
Chairman Mao: That is not reliable. A military correspondent for the New York Times put out a book in August.

Secretary Kissinger: Who is he?

Miss Tang: (After consultations among the Chinese) We'll look it up and tell you.

Chairman Mao: Do you think that the 300,000 troops the US has in Europe at the present time are able to resist a Soviet attack?

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Secretary Kissinger: The weakness in Europe is not our troops but European troops. I think with nuclear weapons we can resist the attack.

Chairman Mao: That correspondent did not believe the US would use nuclear weapons.

Secretary Kissinger: The New York Times has had a vested interest in American defeats the last ten years. If there's a substantial attack in Western Europe, we'll certainly use nuclear weapons. We have 7,000 weapons in Europe, and they are not there to be captured. That is in Europe. In the US we have many more.

Chairman Mao: But there is a considerable portion of Americans who do not believe you'll use them. They do not believe Americans will be willing to die for Europe.

Secretary Kissinger: Mr. Chairman, we've come through a very difficult domestic period, partly caused by Indochina, partly caused by Watergate, in which many defeatist elements have been public. But if you watch what we've done the last five years, we always confront the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union always backs down. And I can assure you, as the President will reassure you, if the Soviet Union attacks Europe, we'll certainly use nuclear weapons. And the Soviet Union must never believe otherwise -- it's too dangerous.

Chairman Mao: You have confidence, you believe in, nuclear weapons. You do not have confidence in your own army.

Secretary Kissinger: We have to face the reality that we will not have so large an army as the Soviet Union. That is a fact. And the most important fact is that no European country will build a large army. If they did, then there would not be a problem. And, therefore, we must build a strategy which is suited to that reality.

Chairman Mao: The Dunkirk strategy is not undesirable either.

Secretary Kissinger: Mr. Chairman, finally we have to have a minimum confidence in each other's statements.

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There will be no Dunkirk strategy, either in the West or in the East. And if there is an attack, once we have stopped the attack, after we have mobilized, we are certain to win a war against the Soviet Union.

Chairman Mao: (Gesturing with his fingers) We adopt the Dunkirk strategy, that is we will allow them to occupy Peking, Tientsin, Wuhan, and Shanghai, and in that way through such tactics we will become victorious and the enemy will be defeated. Both world wars, the first and the second, were conducted in that way and victory was obtained only later.

Secretary Kissinger: It is my belief that if there is a massive Soviet attack anywhere in the world, the US will become involved very quickly. And it is also my conviction that the US will never withdraw from Europe without a nuclear war.

Chairman Mao: There are two possibilities. One is your possibility, the other is that of the New York Times. That is also reflected in Senator Goldwater's speech of June 3 in the Senate.

Secretary Kissinger: What did he say?

Miss Tang: We will send you a copy. It was during the foreign policy debate in the Senate on June 3.

Secretary Kissinger: But what was the main point?

Chairman Mao: His disbelief in Europe.

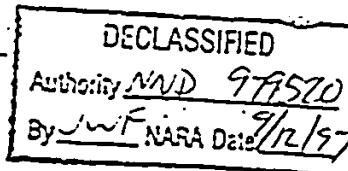
Secretary Kissinger: You have to understand, Mr. Chairman, that it is the year before the election and much of what is said is said for domestic effect. The New York Times has had a certain position for 20 years and it has an unparalleled record for being wrong.

Chairman Mao: It is said that the New York Times is controlled by a Jewish family.

Secretary Kissinger: That is true.

Chairman Mao: And also the Washington Post.

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Secretary Kissinger: The Washington Post -- it is no longer true. (He then conferred with Ambassador Bush who pointed out that Mrs. Graham was Jewish, the daughter of Mr. Meyer.) You are right.

Chairman Mao: The proprietess is Jewish.

This Ambassador (looking toward Bush) is in a dire plight in Peking. Why don't you come and look me up?

Ambassador Bush: I am very honored to be here tonight. I think you are busy and don't have the time to see a plain Chief of the Liaison Office.

Chairman Mao: I am not busy, because I do not have to look over all the routine affairs. I only read the international news.

Secretary Kissinger: But the Chairman knows more about what is being written in America than I do. I didn't know about the book by the New York Times man or Senator Goldwater's speech.

Chairman Mao: You don't have the time. You are too busy.

(To Lord) Mr. Lord, you have now been promoted.

Mr. Lord: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Mao: (To Bush and Lord) You have both been promoted.

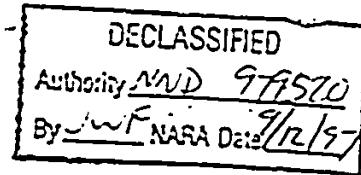
Secretary Kissinger: He (Bush) not yet. He will be in 1980.

Chairman Mao: He can be President.

Secretary Kissinger: In 1980.

Chairman Mao: You don't know my temperament. I like people to curse me (raising his voice and hitting his chair with his hand). You must say that Chairman Mao is an old bureaucrat and in that case I will speed up and meet you. In such a case I will make haste to see you. If you don't curse me; I won't see you, and I will just sleep peacefully.

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Secretary Kissinger: That is difficult for us to do, particularly to call you a bureaucrat.

Chairman Mao: I ratify that (slamming his chair with his hand). I will only be happy when all foreigners slam on tables and curse me.

Secretary Kissinger: We will think about it, but it will not come naturally to us. If we call the Chairman a bureaucrat, it will be a tactical maneuver separate from strategy.

Chairman Mao: But I am a bureaucrat. Moreover I am also a warlord. That was the title I was given by the Soviet Union and the title "bureaucrat" was given me by the Soviet Union. . . .

Secretary Kissinger: But I haven't seen any Soviet visitors here lately.

Chairman Mao: They are cursing us every day. Every day.

Secretary Kissinger: But we don't share the Soviet assessment of China.

Chairman Mao: (Before Secretary Kissinger's sentence is translated) Therefore, I have accepted these two titles, "warlord" and "bureaucrat". No honor could be greater. And you have said that I am a warmonger and an aggressor.

Secretary Kissinger: I?

Chairman Mao: The United States in the UN. The UN passed a resolution which was sponsored by the US in which it was declared that China committed aggression against Korea.

Secretary Kissinger: That was 25 years ago.

Chairman Mao: Yes. So it is not directly linked to you. That was during Truman's time.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. That was a long time ago, and our perception has changed.

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Chairman Mao: (Touching the top of his head) But the resolution has not yet been cancelled. I am still wearing this hat "aggressor". I equally consider that the greatest honor which no other honor could excel. It is good, very good.

Secretary Kissinger: But then we shouldn't change the UN resolution?

Chairman Mao: No, don't do that. We have never put forward that request. We prefer to wear this cap of honor. Chaing kai-shek is saying that we have committed aggression against China. We have no way to deny that. We have indeed committed aggression against China, and also in Korea. Will you please assist me on making that statement public, perhaps in one of your briefings? That is, the Soviet Union has conferred upon me the title of "warlord and bureaucrat", and the United States has conferred upon me "warmonger and aggressor".

Secretary Kissinger: I think I will let you make that public. I might not get the historically correct statement.

Chairman Mao: I have already made it public before you. I have also said this to many visiting foreigners, including Europeans. Don't you have freedom of speech?

Secretary Kissinger: Absolutely.

Chairman Mao: I also have freedom of speech, and the cannons I have fired exceed the cannons they have fired.

Secretary Kissinger: That I have noticed.

Miss Tang: You have noticed....

Secretary Kissinger: The Chairman's cannons.

Chairman Mao: Please send my regards to your Secretary of Defense.

Secretary Kissinger: I will do that.

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Chairman Mao: I am dissatisfied that he went to Japan without coming to Peking. We want to invite him here for the Soviets to see, but you are too miserly. The US is so rich but on this you are too miserly.

Secretary Kissinger: We can discuss it when the President is here.

Chairman Mao: Bring him along. You can bring a civilian and a military member, with your President, both a civilian and a military man.

Secretary Kissinger: Me as the civilian and Schlesinger as the military?

Chairman Mao: Yes. But I won't interfere in your internal affairs. It is up to your side to decide whom you will send.

Secretary Kissinger: Well, he will not come with the President. Maybe later.

Chairman Mao: We would like to invite him to pay a visit to the northeast of our country, Mongolia and Sinkang. He perhaps will not go, nor would you have the courage.

Secretary Kissinger: I would go.

Chairman Mao: (Looking toward Bush) He has been.

Secretary Kissinger: I would certainly go.

Chairman Mao: Good.

Secretary Kissinger: And we have tried to suggest to you that we are prepared to advise or help in some of these problems.

Chairman Mao: As for military aspects we should not discuss that now. Such matters should wait until the war breaks out before we consider them.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, but you should know that we would be prepared then to consider them.

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Chairman Mao: So, shall we call that the end?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger, Ambassador Bush, and Mr. Lord then said goodbye to Chairman Mao. Secretary Kissinger confirmed with Vice Premier Teng that the Chinese would put out a public statement on the meeting and would send the text to the US side immediately. (The Chinese statement is at TAB A.) The Americans then said goodbye to the other Chinese officials and drove away in their cars.

Attachment

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